



# The Goose's Roost Walkway Trail Guide



**Introduction:** The Goose's Roost Interpretive Walkway is approximately 2/10 of a mile one-way. You should allow 30 minutes to an hour to complete the 21 interpretive stops along the trail. At the end of the trail, you must turn around and follow the same trail back. The trail is marked with blue spray-painted dots on trees to show the way.

Your GPS location here is N 36° 48.259', W 080°03.229'. The first half of the trail consists of a concrete walkway. You will continue your walk along a leaf litter trail beyond the fishing pier and amphitheater. Points of interest along the trail are identified with numbered markers which correspond to interpretive information in your trail guide. On your return trip, try to identify the species of trees that you have learned about. Walk quietly. You may see song birds, waterfowl, chipmunks, wild turkey, beaver, squirrels, snakes, raccoons, or even a coyote, deer, or black bear. Stay on the sidewalk / trail and be careful around the water.



## Philpott Lake



You may keep this guide, or recycle by returning it for others to use. We hope you will continue to learn about our natural and cultural resources. Remember: good hikers take only pictures and leave only tracks! Pack it in – pack it out!



**1. Yellow Poplar:** This tree grows tall and straight. The Yellow Poplar can reach heights over 200 feet with diameters of greater than 3 feet. The shape of the yellow blooms in the Spring resemble a tulip, thus giving the Yellow Poplar one of its common names, the tulip tree. The wood is soft and very easy to work. The wood is used in a variety of products including building lumber, veneers, paper pulp, chip board, plywood, and framing for furniture products. The Yellow Poplar is a very important tree for the local sawmilling industry. Deer, birds and small mammals feed off of various parts of the tree. The bark is a favorite food of Philpott's beaver population. Bees make a tasty honey from the blossoms and the Yellow Poplar makes an ideal tree for shade and landscaping.



**2. Cucumbertree:** The Cucumbertree is so called because of the immature fruit's resemblance to a cucumber. It is also known as the cucumber magnolia and typically grows 60-80 feet in height and 2 feet in diameter. It is usually found in mountain valleys and on cool, moist slopes. The wood is light and soft while also durable, harder and heavier than yellow poplar. The wood of the Cucumbertree is used for pallets, crates, plywood and furniture. The tree may also be planted as an ornamental. Its seeds are eaten by a few birds and animals.



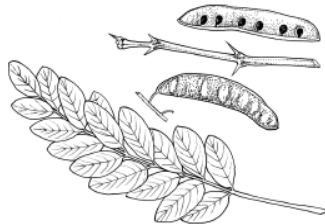
**3. Red Maple:** The Red Maple offers some of the most spectacular fall colors of any tree in the Blue Ridge Mountains with its brilliant orange and scarlet leaves. Its winged shaped seeds fall to the ground like little helicopters, providing food for birds, squirrels, and other rodents. Deer also feed on young Red Maple sprouts. The wood is softer than the other maple species and is somewhat weak. However, it still has value in the furniture and paper industries. Red Maples with their large crowns and 90 foot heights make popular shade and ornamental trees. The Red Maple is the most tolerant to soil variation and conditions of any tree in North America, making it common in many regions



**4. Eastern White Pine:** The Eastern White Pine's wood is light colored, of medium strength, and has straight grain. It has many industrial uses including building lumber, cabinet making, furniture, and interior finishing. White Pines are also grown in Virginia for Christmas trees. Birds and squirrels love the seeds produced in the long cones of the White Pine. In the Philpott Lake area, White Pines may reach a height of 200 feet and may grow to three feet in diameter, making it the largest conifer in eastern North America. During Colonial times, the Eastern White Pine's great height put it in great demand to produce masts for early ships.



**5. Black Gum:** The Black Gum tree generally grows to heights of 40-60 feet with a 1-2 foot diameter. The wood is very tough, cross-grained, hard to work, and warps easily. It can be used for containers, crossties, rough flooring and pulpwood. Sections of trunk were used in colonial days as "bee gums," or places for bees to make their hives. Many species of birds and wildlife eat the fruit, and bees use the nectar to make honey. Black gum heartwood often rots, creating dens for wildlife, including black bears. The fall foliage makes black gum an attractive landscape tree.



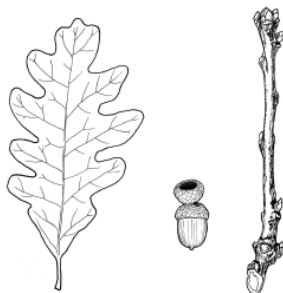
**6. Black Locust:** The Black Locust, also known as the Yellow Locust, grows throughout the western portion of Virginia. It may reach a height of 70 feet and a diameter of 2 feet. Its wood is very heavy, very strong and hard, and is very resistant to decay. These qualities make it excellent for fence posts, poles, split rails, and decking. The Locust was also once used as support timbers in western Virginia's coal mines. Cottontail rabbits and deer feed on Locust sprouts and seedlings. Many birds feed on the seeds produced by the Black Locust. Bees produce a dark, but tasty honey from the Black Locust's flowers. Black Locust trees are damaged by heart rot fungi. Older trees with heart rot become hollow. Woodpeckers and other cavity nesters make these trees home. Black Locusts are also good for reclaiming strip mine sites.



**7. Flowering White Dogwood:** Did you know that the White Dogwood tree is the state tree AND the state flower for Virginia? The brown to red wood is hard, heavy, strong and very close-grained. It was once used for textile shuttles and spools and for handles and mallets, but is seldom harvested today. Although the fruit is poisonous if eaten by humans, more than 35 species of birds and many large and small mammals are known to eat them. Deer and rabbits browse the foliage and twigs. Dogwood is planted as an attractive ornamental tree.



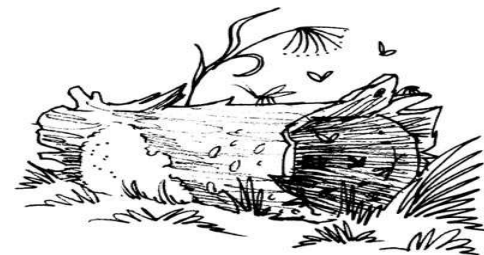
**8. American Hornbeam:** A small bushy tree reaching a height of 30 feet, the American Hornbeam is found all over Virginia. Its wood is heavy, close grained, tough, and very strong. If you look at the shape of the trunk, it resembles well developed, rippling muscles, hence one of the common names, musclewood. It is also sometimes called ironwood. Although the tree never gets large enough for any significant commercial importance, it has been used for handles, mallets, and wedges. The small nutlet fruit is a good food for squirrels and different species of birds.



**9. White Oak:** The majestic white oak can reach a height of 100 feet and a diameter of 4 feet. Found all over Virginia, the white oak is a very important tree for wildlife around the Philpott Lake area. It produces acorns which are preferred by deer, bears, turkeys and various other small animals. The wood is heavy and strong. Its close grain lumber makes it highly sought after to produce barrels, tools, furniture, and flooring for homes. A substance called tyloses plugs the vessels in the wood, making it water-tight. This trait made the white oak's lumber ideal for early ship-building.



**10. Rhododendron:** The rhododendron is actually a native East-Coast Azalea. The shrub is an evergreen with its long, waxy leaves maintaining their green color throughout the winter. In the Spring, the Rhododendron produces a large, fragrant white bloom. Because of its relatively small size, its bushy shape, and its flowering blossoms, the Rhododendron, is sought as an ornamental shrub. In the wild, Rhododendrons grow close together and their twisted branches form thickets which are almost impenetrable. Local animals, especially deer, seek areas covered by the Rhododendron to provide shelter, bedding areas, and protective cover. During World War II, the import of foreign briar for manufacturing smoking pipes was halted and an old southern industry was revived. Pipe blocks were made from Laurel and Rhododendrum burls located at the root collar of the plants and were sold for \$10-\$12 a ton.



**11. Rotting Logs:** Trees, like all plants and animals, will eventually cease to live. A tree may die of old age or it may have its life cut short by disease, insect infestation, fire, weather damage, or by harvest for human use. The fallen tree like you see here and throughout the woods, and the standing snag behind you on the other side of the walkway still serve a valuable purpose, even after they die. They look “dead” and useless, but they are actually teeming with life. As the tree decays, it becomes food and home for thousands of insects. The insects are eaten by reptiles, birds, rodents, other insects, and even the black bears that roam the Philpott forests. The nutrients that were stored in the tree are returned to the soil as the tree decays into soil humus and help to provide a fertile location for future trees to grow, starting the life cycle all over again.

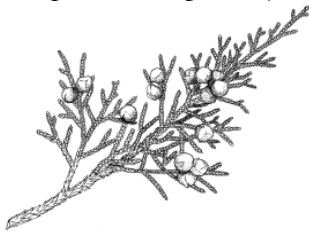


What caused the snags (standing dead trees) behind you to die? Did someone carve their initials in the bark and allow bacteria or some disease to attack the tree? Did they get struck by lightning? Did heavy ice or strong winds break the tops out? Any of these things could have happened. But the value of the trees didn't stop when it died. Look at all the holes. After the tree died, it was attacked by insects. The holes you see were made by woodpeckers searching for a tasty insect treat. And don't be surprised if a critter takes up residence in one of these holes. Someday, these snags will fall. And like the rotting logs you have already learned about, will return its stored nutrients to the soil.



**12. Animal Tracks:** Wild animals can be difficult to detect because of their instinctive behavior to avoid humans. However, the presence of wild animals often can be determined by their tracks in snow, sand, or soft mud (and in this case, wet concrete). You can even find the path, route, or course of the animal by examining its track. Tracking is a technique that scientists and hunters use to find and follow animals. Most people think of following the footprints of an animal, but there are other ways to track animals. For example, you can examine their "scat" or "droppings," look for scratches in the bark of trees or ground, or look for their dens.

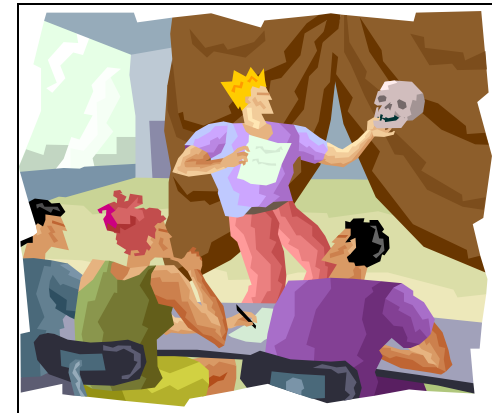
- Watch for additional tracks on your journey.  
Can you tell what animals have passed through here?  
(Answer after Interpretive Stop #21 )



**13. Eastern Redcedar:** The Eastern Redcedar is found in all parts of Virginia. It is often seen growing in abandoned fields and along roadsides. The wood is fragrant, soft, and strong. Notice how a deer has rubbed its antlers on this tree when it was a young sapling? The red heartwood and white sapwood produce beautiful effects when finished. Because the heartwood is resistant to decay, the Redcedar makes excellent posts, poles, cabinets, and chests. The natural oils produced in the wood repel insects. It is often used as paneling for closets and cedar shavings make excellent pet bedding material. The berry-like cones are a favorite food of many song and game birds from waxwings to quail. The thick foliage provides excellent cover for nesting and roosting birds. Redcedars are also good for protecting soils from erosion.



**14. Northern Red Oak:** This straight trunked tree is one of the most important lumber trees in the eastern United States. It can grow up to 90 feet tall and it averages 2-3 feet in diameter. The wood is hard, strong, and coarse-grained, with light reddish-brown heartwood and thin, light-colored sapwood. It is used for paneling, furniture, cabinets and flooring. The Red Oak's acorns provide food for many mammals and birds. The tree's symmetrical shape and fall color make it a desirable landscape tree.



Feel free to take a seat in the amphitheater to read # 14 and rest up for the next section of trail which continues just past the amphitheater screen. It is not advisable to continue if wearing sandals or flip-flops.





**15. Philpott Lake:** In 1944, due to severe flooding for many years, Congress authorized the construction of Philpott Dam to tame the Smith River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began construction of the 220 foot high Philpott Dam in 1948 and started protecting the downstream towns from devastating floods in 1951. With the completion of the dam, 3000 acres of mountain valleys in the Counties of Henry, Patrick and Franklin were flooded to create today's Philpott Lake.



**Watershed:** Water from the lake eventually is released into Smith River which empties to the Dan River which empties into the Roanoke River which flows into the Atlantic Ocean at the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. The drainage basin (we are a part of the Roanoke River Basin) acts like a series of funnels to collect the water within the basin and channel it to a waterway. Different river basins are separated by some geological feature, such as a mountain range. We lie between the James River Basin and the Cape Fear River Basin.



The lake is surrounded by 7,000 acres of forested land which is owned and managed by the Corps. With all of the water and forests, the Philpott area offers a variety of recreational opportunities for every sportsman and outdoor recreational enthusiasts.



© Katherine Hocker

**16. Beaver Activity:** Beavers alter the environment more than any other creature, except for humans. Look at the Virginia Pines. The bark at the bottom has been eaten away by beavers. One pair of beavers alone can cut as many as 400 trees annually to build their dams and the lodges in which they live. Being totally vegetarians, beavers eat bark and twigs from the trees they cut. If you're around the lake at night, listen for the tell-tale "slap" on the water. This is the sound of the beaver communicating a sign of danger to other beavers in the area.



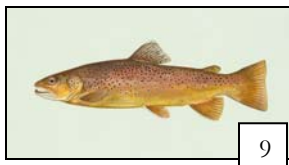
**17. White Quartz:** The white quartz boulder outcroppings are typical of the naturally occurring vein quartz found throughout Virginia's mountains. This quartz is usually a milky white color and is very hard and durable. The black or reddish staining is from iron oxide and/or manganese. White quartz is used in cast concrete products and as a decorative stone around bushes, trees, flowers, and driveways. White quartz was very valuable to Native Americans to fabricate arrowheads, spear points, and other tools.



**18. Fish Structure:** Structural features, such as the fallen trees you see here, are important in helping to maintain a diverse and healthy lake ecosystem. They are also important in sustaining gamefish and non-gamefish populations. Structure provides a place for fish to hide from predators, shade from the hot summer sun, spawning and nesting habitat, and places for food organisms to live. Fish like to hide, especially when bigger fish and other predators are looking for a meal. Without hiding places like this fallen tree, populations of young fish and smaller fish species are at risk of being significantly reduced by predation (eaten). As you continue on your walk, look for other fish structures.

A list of Philpott's top ten fish species would include:

- |                    |                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Largemouth Bass | 6. Crappie                      |
| 2. Smallmouth Bass | 7. Bluegill                     |
| 3. Walleye         | 8. Pumpkinseed                  |
| 4. Channel Catfish | 9. Brown Trout (Smith River)    |
| 5. Carp            | 10. Rainbow Trout (Smith River) |



**19. Virginia Pine:** The Virginia Pine's lumber is used in rough construction, however it warps very easily during wet and dry cycles. Its long, woody fibers make it excellent for paper production. The Virginia Pine has cones which mature and drop their seeds in two years. But the cones can remain on the tree for several years after the seeds fall. Small songbirds love the seeds and thick stands of young Virginia Pine make an ideal place for birds to roost. Deer also like to feed on the young foliage. A tree's bark is like our skin. It protects the tree from bacteria and diseases. These Virginia Pines will most likely eventually die because they have lost their protective "skin". What animal do you think ate the bark? Because of the Virginia Pine's ability to grow in very poor soil, the tree has been used in plantings to reclaim areas which have been stripped mined. In recent years, pine bark beetles have devastated stands of Virginia Pine around the Philpott Lake area.



**20. Mountain Laurel:** Mountain Laurel is an evergreen, many-stemmed, thicket-forming shrub or sometimes a small tree with a short, crooked trunk. It has stout, spreading branches, a compact, rounded crown and beautiful, large, pink flower clusters. Mountain Laurel is one of the most beautiful native flowering shrubs and is well displayed as an ornamental in many parks. The stamens of the flowers have an odd, spring-like mechanism which spreads pollen when tripped by a bee. The wood has been used for tool handles and turnery, and the burls, or hard knot-like growths, for briar tobacco pipes.

**Warning** Leaves and flowers contain poisonous substances and should not be eaten by humans or animals.



**21. The Forest:** Look out across the lake at all of the beautiful trees. But trees play a much more important part in our life than just providing beauty. Trees absorb millions of tons of pollutants from the air, making it safe for us to breathe. Without trees, much of our furniture, like the bed we sleep on, would not exist. The paper for the trail booklet you're reading would not exist. Trees absorb many tons of carbon dioxide to protect our world from run-away global warming. Trees replenish the oxygen we need to support our lives. The woods around you provide shelter and food for the many species of wildlife at Philpott Lake. Trees provide leaf cover to replenish nutrients in the soil and to prevent erosion. It is pretty safe to say that if all the trees disappeared, so would human life. We encourage you to learn more about trees and to learn ways to protect our forests from wildfires, diseases and abuse. Our resources are our future.

**THIS MARKS THE END OF THE TRAIL. TURN AROUND**

\* **Answer to Animal Tracks Question:** Deer, Turkey, & Raccoon

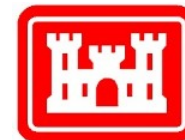
### Internet Study Topics:

- ~Preventing forest wildfires
- ~How trees reduce pollution
- ~Invasive species
- ~Why leaves change colors in the Fall
- ~Tree diseases
- ~Global-warming
- ~Photosynthesis
- ~Urban forests

**Bobber the Water Safety Dog says:**



- 1. Always wear your life jacket while around water.**
- 2. Never swim alone**
- 3. Don't dive into lake waters without first checking for underwater hazards.**
- 4. Don't take unnecessary chances.**



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